

# Ahura Mazdā and the Darkness

## About the Meaning of Y. 44, 5b

ANTONIO PANAINO, Bologna

Y. 44 is doubtless one of the best-known texts among the Gāthic *hāitis*; its relatively clear style, based on the syntactic repetition (19 times) of the opening interrogative (and rhetorical) formula<sup>1</sup> (*taṭ θβā pərəsā ərəš mōi vaocā ahurā* “I ask You this, tell me truly, o Ahura”) has attracted the interest of many scholars, in particular with regard to stanzas 3–5,<sup>2</sup> where the functions of Ahura Mazdā as a “creator-organizer” of the cosmos are patently represented:

Y. 44, 3:

*taṭ θβā pərəsā ərəš mōi vaocā ahurā*  
*kasnā zqθā ptā ašahiia pouruiō*  
*kasnā xōng strēmca dāt aduuanəm*  
*kē yā mā uxšieiti nərəfsaiti θβaṭ*  
*tācēt mazdā vasamī aniiācā vīduiē.*

“This I ask You, tell me truly, O Ahura:

Who (was) the primaeval father of *aša-* by means of (his) begetting?

Who fixed the course of the sun and of the stars?

Who (is he) through whom the moon (now) waxes, later wanes?<sup>3</sup>

These and other things indeed I wish to know, O Mazdā.”<sup>4</sup>

- 1 See INSLEY 1975, p. 240; HUMBACH 1991, II, pp. 145–146; cf. SCHMITT 1967, p. 36. The frequent interrogation attested in this *hāiti* and opened with *kasnā* should be compared with the current reference to *kāsmāi* in the famous Vedic hymn to the “Unknown god” (*Rv.* 10, 121; AUFRECHT 1877, pp. 423–424).
- 2 See INSLEY 1975, pp. 65–66; KELLENS/PIRART 1988, pp. 148–149; HUMBACH 1991, I, pp. 157–158.
- 3 Cf. *Yt.* 7, 2 [= *Ny.* 3, 4]: *kaṭ mā uxšieiti kaṭ mā nərəfsaiti. pañca.dasa mā uzuxšieiti pañca.dasa mā nərəfsaiti* “When the moon waxes, when the moon wanes? Fifteen days the moon waxes, fifteen days the moon wanes”; Pahlavi translation: *čiyōn ka māh waxšēd čiyōn māh nirfsēd, 15 ka māh waxšēd 15 ka māh nirfsēd* “When the moon waxes, when the moon wanes? Fifteen (days are) when the moon waxes, fifteen (days are) when the moon wanes” (DHALLA 1908, pp. 90–91; TARAF 1981, pp. 70–71).
- 4 Y. 44, 3 (DHABHAR 1949, pp. 186–187): *ān ī man tō pursēm rāst man gōwē ohrmazd. kē zabag [ān ī ašwahišt zabag kē, u-š kē] pid ī ahlāyih fradom [kū-š fradom parwardārīh*

Y. 44, 4:

*taṭ ʾβā pərəsā ərəš mōi vaocā ahurā  
kasnā dərətā zəmcā adō nəbāscāscā  
anuapaštōiš kē apō uruuarascā  
kē vātāi duuqnmāibūiascā yaogəṭ āsū  
kasnā vaṇhēuš mazdā dāmiš manayhō.*

“This I ask You, tell me truly, O Ahura:

Who upheld the earth below and the nimbuses (above; i.e., the heavens)  
from falling?<sup>5</sup> Who the waters and the plants?

Who yoked a pair of swift (horses) to the wind and the clouds?

Who is the creator of the good thought, O Mazdā?”<sup>6</sup>

Y. 44, 5:

*taṭ ʾβā pərəsā ərəš mōi vaocā ahurā  
kē huuapā raocāscā dāt tēmāscā  
kē huuapā xəfnəmcā dāt zaēmācā  
kē yā ušā arətm.piʾβā xšapācā  
yā manaοʾrīš cazdōṇhuuantəm arəʾahiiā.*

“This I ask You, tell me truly, O Ahura:

Which craftman arranged lights and darkness?

Which craftman arranged sleep and waking?

Who (is He) through whom dawn, midday and night (were fixed)

which remind the desiring (person) of the object of (his) desire?”<sup>7</sup>

*kē kard]. kē xwarxšēd ud star dād rāh [kū rāh ī awēšān kē dād]. az kē ka māh waxšēd  
ud nirfšēd ī tō [kū-š abzāyišn ud kāhišn az kē, ān-iz-im ohrmazd kāmag ān-iz ī any  
āgābibišnīh kū bē dānēm]* “This I ask You, tell me truly, O Ohrmazd: Which offspring  
[who (did) that (which is) the offspring of the righteousness? and who is he] the first  
father of the righteousness, [that (is), who made the first nourishment?] Who made the  
way of the Sun and of the Moon?” [Who is that made their way?] By whom the Moon  
now waxes and wanes if not you? [That (is) their increasing and decreasing (derives)  
from whom? This I want to know!]”

5 OBERLIES 1998, p. 340, n. 32, compares this very passage with those contained in the hymn to Indra of *Rv.* 6, 30, 3–5. Cf. GELDNER 1951, II, p. 129.

6 Y. 44, 4 (DHABHAR 1949, pp. 187–188): *ān ī man tō pursēm rāst man gōwē ohrmazd. kē dārēd zamīg pad adārišnīh [kū-š dāštār-ēw ī gētīg nēst]. a-bē-ōbadišn [ay ēn dānēm kū bē nē ōbadēd], kē āb ud urwar dād. az kē ka wād abr āyōzēd tēz [ō xwēškārīh], kē ohrmazd wahman dām [kū wahman dām ī kē].* “This I ask you, tell me truly, O Ohrmazd: Who holds the earth in the state of unpreservation? [That (is), he (is) not the unique keeper of the material world]. Its state of unfallingness [that (is) to say I know this, that it does not fall]. Who created water and plants? By whom (it happens) that the wind sharply yokes clouds [to their proper function]? Whose creature, O Ohrmazd, is Wahman? [That (is), Wahman (is) creature of whom?]”

note 6, line 3: [ō xwēškārīh]: brackets have been added (correction by Werner Sundermann)

It is not my intention to discuss in detail in the present paper the tantalizing problem of the primordial ontologic role played by Ahura Mazdā – if he really was *stricto sensu* a “creative” or simply an “organizing”<sup>8</sup> divinity. GHERARDO GNOLI<sup>9</sup> has already systematically countered the arguments of those scholars<sup>10</sup> who tried to maintain the existence of the idea of a *creatio ex nihilo*<sup>11</sup> in the framework of the Zoroastrian doctrines. In contrast with such a thesis, GNOLI has clearly shown that the Indo-Iranian religious traditions did not attest a concept<sup>12</sup> that in its turn had been independently developed in the Judaeo-Christian tradition<sup>13</sup> only during the Hellenistic period.<sup>14</sup> In fact, as we may note, according to *Genesis* I, 1, Jahweh seems to be using a kind of primordial material for

- 7 Y. 44, 5 (DHABHAR 1949, p. 187): *ān ī man tō pursēm rāst man gōwē ohrmazd. kē pad hu-ayābāgih rōšnīh dād ud kē tārigih, kē pad hu-ayābāgih xwāb dād ud zēnāwandīh [tuxšāgih]. kē ōš rapihwin šab [ušahin rapihwin ud zamānag ī šab kē dād]. [kē paymān ī ōy ī hamāl-wizārdār pad dādestān kū ān zamānag ka sōšyāns rasēd kē dād.]* “This I ask you, tell me truly, O Ohrmazd: Who in good comprehension created lights and darkness? Who in good comprehension created sleep and awakening [diligence]? Who (made) dawn, afternoon, night? [Who created the night (and) afternoon (*gāhs*) and the time of the night? Who (created) the period of him who (is) the comrade-(and)-redeemer according to the law? That (is), who created that time when the Sōšyāns will arrive?”
- 8 See the discussion in KELLENS 1989. In any case the “organization” of the cosmos from chaos cannot be considered but a creative operation different, of course, from that of the Christian tradition.
- 9 GNOLI 1963. Cf. already SPIEGEL 1871, p. 454; and WEST 1880, p. 9, n. 2.
- 10 See in particular CASARTELLI 1884, pp. 24–28; JACKSON 1928, p. 120, seems to deny the idea of a *creatio ex nihilo* in the earlier sources, while he accepts its presence with reference to *Bd.* 30, 5–6 (like CASARTELLI); these very passages of the *Bundahišn* have been discussed in detail by GNOLI 1963; for the earlier discussion see DE HARLEZ (1879, pp. 116–117, 141–142); GRAY 1908–1927, col. 162; MOULTON 1913, pp. 291–292; ZAEHNER 1961, pp. 54–55. Cf. also GNOLI 1962, pp. 117–118, n. 99 and 100.
- 11 According to LONG (1963, p. 149) the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* should be characterized by four elements: 1) the omnipotence of the creator; 2) his unique and isolated existence in a status of void, before the origin of space and time; 3) the creation whether it is the fruit of a deliberate decision of God; 4) god is free, i.e., not determined from a pre-existing or a co-existing condition.
- 12 See now OBERLIES’ considerations about the *ásat*, which cannot be considered as a “Nicht-Sein”, but like a primordial chaos (1998, p. 383); the situation concerning the Upaniṣadic literature seems to be more complex (see again OBERLIES 1998, p. 383, and in particular n. 230).
- 13 I would like to remark, however, that the problem of the creation *ex nihilo* seems to have been, at least in the past centuries, assessed according to confessional terms, mostly originating from the framework of the Christian theology. The history of the Mazdean concept of creation, on the contrary, cannot be resolved with categories which have been developed for reasons that have nothing to do with the early Iranian cultural patterns.
- 14 See WESTERMANN 1974, p. 152; FILORAMO (apud PETTAZZONI 1990, p. XIX) remarks that the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* is only attested for the first time in *Macc.* 7, 28.

note 11, lines 3/4: according to Maria Macuch and Werner Sundermann the sentence „the creation whether it is the fruit of a ...“ is not clear/correct

his creation of heavens and earth,<sup>15</sup> the realization of which is designated by the verb *br'*,<sup>16</sup> lit. “to build, to make, to create”. By the way, let us also remark that this very kind of theological and philosophical approach to the definition of the primordial origin of the creation is nothing but a “modern” problem, and that its intellectual complexity was beyond the perspectives and the cultural schemes of those ancient peoples. Thus, coming back to the Indo-Iranian framework, we can affirm that Ahura Mazdā, as in the case of the Vedic gods, was basically conceived as a divinity operating with a *primaeva* stock,<sup>17</sup> a kind of primordial “substance”, in a still latent phase which was between cosmic order and disorder.

The Pahlavi sources offer, in the framework of a radical dualism which is structurally different from the theological pattern of the Gāthās (based on the direct opposition between the two Mainiius), an interesting development of earlier traditions in any case. According to the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 64,<sup>18</sup> Ohrmazd produced or generated a “Form of Fire” (*āsrō-kerpa*) from the “Light without beginning” (*asar rošnīh*; cf. L.Av. *anayra raocā*);<sup>19</sup> in addition this passage shows the identity between God himself and that “Form of Fire”. According to *Ir.Bd.* 1, 44,<sup>20</sup> Ohrmazd brought forth the creation from his own essence – which is the “material Light” (*gētīg rōšnīh*) –, the form of his creatures, in a “Form of Fire” (*Ohrmazd az ān ī xwēš xwadīh, az gētīg rōšnīh, kirb ī dāmān ī xwēš frāz brēhēnīd pad ātaxš kirb*); contrariwise, Ahreman (*Ir.Bd.* 1, 47), brought forth his creation from the material darkness, which is his own essence (*gannāg mēnōg az gētīg tārīgīh ān ī xwēš-tan dām frāz kirrēnīd*).<sup>21</sup>

The peculiar fact to which I would like to attract scholars’ attention in this work concerns the meaning of the second verse-line of *Y.* 44, 5, which is implicitly referred to an early action of Ahura Mazdā:

*kē huuāpā, raocāscā dāt tāmāscā*  
“Which craftman arranged the lights and the darkness?”

From this passage we should be compelled to deduce that Ahura Mazdā actually was *\*tāmāh-dā-*, and that the origin of the darkness as well as that of the light derived from him. This way Ahura Mazdā would be perfectly similar to

15 See, e.g. KÜNG et al. 1986, p. 244. A different opinion has been expressed by SARNA 1989, p. 5.

16 Cf. GESENIUS 1962, p. 113. On the contrary VON RAD 1978, pp. 55–56, suggests that the special use of such a verb denoting absence of any effort and never followed by a reference to a complement of matter implies the idea of a *creatio ex nihilo*.

17 See MACDONELL 1898, pp. 11–15.

18 Cf. WEST 1882, pp. 197–199.

19 See GNOLI 1962, pp. 117–118. We may recall that *anayra-* has been generally translated as “endless”, while its basic meaning is “without beginning”.

20 See GNOLI 1962, p. 118; cf. CERETI/MACKENZIE 2003, p. 38.

21 ZAEHNER 1955, p. 281; cf. CERETI/MACKENZIE 2003, pp. 38–39.

Jahweh, who, according to *Isaiah* 45, 7, “creates darkness” and “evil”, as already MOULTON remarked.<sup>22</sup> This is what apparently results, but is such a conclusion plausible? And does it fit into the Old Avestan pattern?

It is well known that the stem *tamah-*, n.,<sup>23</sup> in Old and Later Avestan has only a negative meaning; in Old Avestan the sole attestation of *tamah-* other than this occurs in Y. 31, 20 (*darəgēm āiīū tamañhō* “the long duration of the darkness”), where it is referred to the obscure place of damnation of the enemy of the *ašauna-*. In Later Avestan some passages are even more striking: the abode fashioned (*frāθβərəsat*) by Ahura Mazdā for Miθra (Yt. 10, 50) above the shining Mount Harā is a place “where there is no night or darkness [...]” (*yaθra nōiṭ xšapa nōiṭ tamā*),<sup>24</sup> because it is continuously lightened by the sun, a statement which implies that a perfect (i.e. “unmixed”) creation cannot be infected by the presence of the darkness. The Daēuuas, on the contrary, run in the darkness (Y. 57, 18: *daēuua ... taršta tamañhō duuarənte*) and they manifest themselves – or they have the “aspect” (*ciθra-*)<sup>25</sup> – of the darkness, being in fact *tāmasciθra-*,<sup>26</sup> while their strength would grow if the sun (Huuarə.xšaēta) were not able to rise again (Yt. 6, 3: *yeiði.zī huuarə nōiṭ uzuxšiiēiti aḍa daēuua vīspā mərəncinti yā hənti haptō.karšuuōhuua*).

Ohrmazd, before the creation, was ever in the Light (*andar rōšnīh hamē būd*), because – as the first chapter of the *Iranian Bundahišn* (par. 2)<sup>27</sup> explains – “that Light is the space and place of Ohrmazd” (*ān rōšnīh gāh ud gyāg ī ohrmazd*). The scribe added: “there are some who call it the Light without beginning” (*ast kē asar rōšnīh gōwēd*).<sup>28</sup>

In addition, the demoniac and dangerous dimension of the darkness is directly confirmed by Vedic sources, where *tāmas-* is the dangerous enemy of the Dawn (Uṣās) – sister of Rātri, the goddess of the bright night<sup>29</sup> – and represents the chaotic obscurity trying to kidnap Uṣās;<sup>30</sup> Rātri, in fact, is given the splendour of the stars and drives the darkness away (see, e.g., 10, 127, 2: *jyōtiṣā*

22 MOULTON 1913, p. 291.

23 BARTHOLOMAE 1904, cols. 648–649.

24 Cf. GERSHEVITCH 1959, pp. 98–99.

25 See PANAINO 2003.

26 BARTHOLOMAE 1904, col. 648. Cf. Yt. 6, 4: *yō yazaite huuarə yaṭ aməšəm raēm auruuat. aspəm paitištātē tamañhəm, paitištātē tāmasciθranəm daēuuanəm* “he who worships the Sun, immortal, splendid, having swift horses, in opposition to the darkness, in opposition to the demons who manifest themselves in the darkness” (or “who have the aspect of the darkness”).

27 Cf. ZAEHNER 1955, p. 312; cf. CERETI/MACKENZIE 2003, pp. 32–33.

28 Cf. ZAEHNER 1955, p. 278; cf. CERETI/MACKENZIE 2003, p. 32.

29 On the complex dialectic relating Rātri to Uṣās (cf. also the compound *uṣāsānaktā*), see the detailed discussion offered by MONTESI 1957 [= 1993]. In Rv. 10, 89, 15, the “blinding darkness” (*andhām tāmah*) is set in opposition to the “starlit night” (*sujoytiṣo aktāvah*). Cf. also PANAINO 2001.

30 HILLEBRANDT 1927, pp. 26–27; 1980, pp. 31–32.

*bādhate támaḥ* “with light she drives the darkness away”);<sup>31</sup> she also protects her worshippers from the wolf and the thief, i.e. from all those dangerous creatures considered as Dāēvic in the Avestan framework and that are *təmasciθra-*. Then, why is Ahura Mazdā attributed with the act of *dā*-ing (creating/placing/fixing/arranging) *təmaḥ*-?

A fitting solution actually comes from the Vedic sources, in particular from *Rv.* 10, 129, 1–3,<sup>32</sup> a text which in some points presents us with a series of cosmological and speculative<sup>33</sup> questions recalling those of *Y.* 44:

10, 129, 1:

*násad āsīn nó sád āsīt tadānīm násīd rájo nó v<sub>i</sub> yòmā paró yát /*

*kīm āvarīvaḥ kúḥa kásya sárman āmbhaḥ kīm āsīd gáhanam gabhīrám*

“There was not the non-existent nor the existent then; there was not the air nor the heaven which is beyond. What did it contain? Where? In whose protection? Was there water, unfathomable, profound?”.

31 See MACDONELL 1917, p. 202. Cf. HILLEBRANDT 1913, p. 149; PAPPESIO 1929–1931, p. 222; RENOU 1966, pp. 135–136; VARENNE 1967, p. 99. Cf. MACDONELL 1898, p. 124.

32 AUFRECHT 1877, II, p. 430. See MACDONELL 1917, pp. 207–209, whose English translation I have basically followed. See also the translations offered by RENOU, PAPPESIO and GELDNER. RENOU 1956, p. 124: (1) “Ni le non-Être n’existait alors, ni l’Être. Il n’existait l’espace aérien, ni le firmament, au-delà. Qu’est-ce que se mouvait puissamment? Où? Sous la garde de qui? Était-ce l’eau, insondablement profonde?” (2) “Il n’existait en ce temps ni mort, ni non-mort; il n’y avait de signe distinctif pour la nuit ou le jour. L’Un respirait de son propre élan, sans qu’il y ait de souffle. En dehors de Cela, il n’existait rien d’autre.” (3) “A l’origine les ténébres étaient cachées par les ténébres. Cet univers n’était qu’onde indistincte. Alors, par la puissance de l’Ardeur, l’Un prit naissance, (principe) vide et recouvert de vacuité”; PAPPESIO (1929–1931, pp. 222–223: (1) “Allora non c’era il non essere, non c’era l’essere; non c’era l’atmosfera, né il cielo (che è) al di sopra. Che cosa si muoveva? dove? sotto la protezione di chi? Che cosa era l’acqua (del mare) in-scandagliabile, profonda?” (2) “Allora non c’era la morte, né l’immortalità; non c’era il contrassegno della notte e del giorno. Senza (produr) vento respirava per propria forza quell’ [tad] Uno [ekam (neutro)]; oltre di lui non c’era nient’altro.” (3) “Tenebra ricoperta da tenebra era in principio; tutto questo (universo) era un ondeggiamento [salila] indistinto. Quel principio vitale che era serrato dal vuoto, generò se stesso (come) l’uno mediante la potenza del proprio calore [tapas]”. GELDNER 1951, III, pp. 359–360: (1) “Weder Nichtsein noch Sein war damals; nicht war der Luftraum noch der Himmel darüber. Was strich hin und her? Wo? In wessen Obhut? Was war das unergründliche tiefe Wasser?” (2) “Weder Tod noch Unsterblichkeit war damals; nicht gab es ein Anzeichen von Tag und Nacht. Es atmete nach seinem Eigengesetz ohne Windzug dieses Eine. Irrend ein Anderes als dieses war weiter nicht vorhanden.” (3) “Im Anfang war Finsternis in Finsternis versteckt; all dieses war unkenntliche Flut. Das Lebenskräftige, das von Leere eingeschlossen war, das Eine wurde durch die Macht seines heißen Dranges geboren.” See also the translation and the ample commentary formerly given by GELDNER 1908, pp. 14–15, 16–23 and *passim*. About the commentary by Śāyaṇa see again GELDNER 1908, pp. 24–34. Cf. also VARENNE 1967, p. 331; SANI 2000, p. 65.

33 GELDNER 1908, pp. 10–11 and *passim*.

10, 129, 2:

*ná mṛtyúr āsīd amṛtaṃ ná tárhi ná rátri, yā ábna āsīt praketaḥ /  
ānīd avātāṃ svadhāyā tād ékaṃ tásmād dhānyān ná parāḥ kīm canāsa*

“There was not death nor immortality then. There was not the beacon of the night, not of the day. That one breathed, windless, by its own power. Other than that there was not anything beyond”.

10, 129, 3:

*tāma āsīt támasā gūlham ágre ’ praketaṃ salilam sárvaṃ ā idám /  
tuchyénābh, v āpihitam yād āsīt tāpasas tán mahināyātaikam*

“Darkness was in the beginning hidden by darkness; indistinguishable, this all was water. That which, coming into being, was covered with the void, that One arose through the power of heat”.

From these passages we can deduce that *tāmas-* was associated with the image of the primordial chaos, when “darkness was hidden by darkness”, and when neither Rātri (the starlit Night) nor the day (*ahan-*) existed yet. If we connect the basic image of this chaos to the Iranian, i.e. Mazdean context, we could suppose that the act of Ahura Mazdā would have been, thus, the establishing of an “order” in his work of creation/organization of the world, by fixing (*dāt*) the alternation between the lights (*raocah-*) and the darkness (*tamah-*) as well as that between sleeping (*xʷafnəm*) and waking (*zaēmā*). In fact, the need of sleep is also a consequence of the “mixed” existence, if we consider that Miθra is “sleepless” (*axʷafna-*), while Būšiiastā<sup>34</sup> (“What-will-be-ness”) is the demoness encharged with retarding human awakening each morning (in fact she is *zairina-* “weakening, putting to sleep”)<sup>35</sup> in order to make people desert their good duties. Anyway, it is in the determination of the orderly and regular succession between night and day that we can see the first divine success over the original chaos and its darkness. The same idea was probably expressed through the Vedic myth of the liberation of Uṣas (or of her cattle and horses) from the Vala, the rock in which she was imprisoned, if MONTESI is right when he states that “il mito della liberazione dell’aurora è il mito dell’instaurazione archetipica dell’Ordine (*ṛtā*) come successione del giorno e della notte di contro al caos delle origini”.<sup>36</sup>

There is no reason to maintain that Ahura Mazdā was creating something bad or negative, because the questions of Y. 44 surely concern the condition of the world in its “mixed” status and not in its divine meta-temporal and eternal dimension, existing before the clash of the good and evil principles. This interpretation is confirmed by many statements contained in the text such as (a) the reference to the path of the sun and of the stars (*xʷəṇg strēmca ... aduuānəm*), (b) the essential mention of the lunar phases (*mā uxšiiēitī nərəfsaitī*), and (c)

34 See GRAY 1929, pp. 202–203. Cf. BARTHOLOMAE 1904, col. 970.

35 Cf. BARTHOLOMAE 1904, col. 1681.

36 MONTESI 1953–1954, p. 27. The close link between darkness and ignorance is well developed in Hinduism; see DONIGER 2002, pp. 90, 117, 207, 441.



that of the main periods of an entire day (morning, midday and night; *uša arām. piθβā xšapācā*). The idea of a regular and ordered cosmic movement, established, fixed, then created, by Ahura Mazdā, implied of course God's capability of controlling, at least partially (i.e. before the complete elimination of *druj-* and of Angra Mainyu, after the intermediate phase of mixture, the *gumēzišn* of the Pahlavi books), the chaotic primordial material, and in particular its darkness, these representing *de facto* the "cosmic disorder" (*druj-*), while the divine normative intervention emphasized the power of *aša-*, triumphing at the end of the fight with the final restoration (*frašō.kərəti-*) of the world. In this respect the standard dualistic scheme of the Zoroastrian sources presents us with an interesting nuance, which could only *prima facie* be considered contradictory, i.e., with the idea that Ahura Mazdā had to manage the creation in order to govern the inevitable (but provisional, i.e., limited in time) presence of evil forces. Then he had to organize life in the actual reality, also imposing his force on the primordial obscurities. Thus, the present text shows the result of the creative action of Ahura Mazdā with reference to a dimension, being not that of the *manahiia- abu-* (or *manajhō*),<sup>37</sup> but of the *astuuant-*,<sup>38</sup> or, with Later Avestan terms, that of the *gaēiθiia- sti-* and not the *mainiiauu-* one (Pahl. *mēnōg* and *gētīg*).<sup>39</sup> In fact, if we take into consideration the cosmology of the *Bundahišn*, in particular the first,<sup>40</sup> the second<sup>41</sup> and the fifth chapter,<sup>42</sup> it is clear that the movement of the astral bodies, the lunar phases and the alternation of day and night are strictly related to the presence of Ahreman in the good creation, because the Ahuric beings were put in motion only after such an invasion. In addition, this explains why, e.g., the abode of Miθra, which is outside of the *gumēzišn* dimension, does not know the presence of the darkness. In addition we may consider the Pahlavi commentary to Y. 44, 5, where it is clear that the passage was understood by the Sasanian translators as referring to the *gumēzišn* and to the intermediate period, that only the Sōšyāns will purify and dissolve into the *frašgird*, i.e. the "final Restoration".

We shall also take into consideration the later Avestan opposition between *anayra raocā* "the lights without beginning" (i.e., "unlimited") and *anayra tāmā* "the darkness without beginning", which is attested in the parallel passages of *Hadōxt Nask* 2, 15 and 2, 33.<sup>43</sup> In fact, after the meeting with the *daēnā-*, at its fourth step (*tūirīm gāma*) the soul of the right man (*yō narš ašaonō uruuu*) enters the *anayra raocā* (then the highest paradisiacal level; *anayraēšuuu raocōhuu*),

37 Cf. Y. 40, 2; 53, 6.

38 Cf. Y. 28, 2; 43, 3.

39 See GNOLI 1963; SHAKED 1971.

40 See now CERETTI/MACKENZIE 2003. Cf. ZAEHNER 1955; NYBERG 1929.

41 See HENNING 1942.

42 See MACKENZIE 1964.

43 See PIRAS 2000, pp. 54, 57.



while that of the sinner (*yō narš druuatō uruua*) reaches the lowest place, i.e., hell, in the unlimited darkness (*anayraēšuuā tamōhuua*). This comparison raises some interesting reflections concerning the background of late Zoroastrian uranography. In fact, according to *Ir.Bd.* 2, 13,<sup>44</sup> *asar rōšnīh*, i.e. *anayra raocā*, were placed by god above the sphere of the Sun and correspond to the throne (*gāh*) of Ohrmazd; they lie above the throne of the Amahraspand.<sup>45</sup> On the contrary, the unlimited darkness corresponds to the lowest infernal place, but it does not find any special cosmic collocation, because hell is neither in heaven nor is it apparently visible, while the evil forces are actually imprisoned in the earthly “mixed dimension”, or in the first sphere of heaven, that of the fixed stars. To be more precise, this sphere was actually divided, according to Pahlavi uranography (see *Ir.Bd.* 2, 9), into two levels: in the first one the stars revolve fighting with the planets from the time of Ahreman’s irruption; the second one is that of the “Unmixable stars”, which was made “for the purpose that at the time of the aggressors’s arrival they should repel him in battle and not let him carry his pollution (lit. “mixing”) higher up”.<sup>46</sup> As HENNING has shown,<sup>47</sup> with reference to *Ir.Bd.* 6 (J), 5,<sup>48</sup> the function of the Unmixable stars was that of preventing darkness and sinfulness from carrying their pollution higher up to the upper spheres towards the Paradise of Ohrmazd. Although the details of this doctrine belong to later astronomic-astrological speculations, in my opinion it is highly probable that the presence of the darkness, also of the *anayra tamā*, was linked with the mixed dimension (i.e. with the earth and the heaven of the stars, where the demoniac Pairikās and the worm stars [*stārō kərəmā*] are active).<sup>49</sup>

Thus, we can suspect that these *anayra tamā* correspond symbolically to the original, shapeless, disorderly primordial state of obscurity, existing before the creation and still surviving in hell. But, if the devilish forces are now imprisoned – in time and space – in the ordered scheme of the good creation, this unlimited darkness should be located in *intimo demonio*; in other words, it should represent his (i.e. Ahreman’s) darkest and most disordered “ipseity”, the farthest place from the divine brightness, the enlightened abode of Ahura Mazdā. This seems to be absolutely correct if we recall that, at the beginning of his creation, Ohrmazd, who was high (*bālistīg*), in the light (*andar rōšnīh*; see *Ir.Bd.* 1, 0),<sup>50</sup> found the basic “Form of Fire” for his work in the *asar rōšnīh*, the “Light without beginning” (see *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 64), while – as stated in *Ir.Bd.* 1, 2–3<sup>51</sup> – Ahreman, who “was deep down in the darkness” (*andar tārīgīh*) and

44 See HENNING 1942, p. 232; cf. ANKLESARIA 1956, pp. 34–35.

45 HENNING 1942, pp. 233, 239–241.

46 HENNING 1942, pp. 232–233.

47 HENNING 1942, pp. 240–241.

48 Cf. ANKLESARIA 1956, pp. 84–85.

49 PANAINO 1990, pp. 34, 63–64, 68, 75–78, 92–93, 97–98, 106, 139–141; 1995, pp. 19, 37, 41.

50 CERETI/MACKENZIE 2003, pp. 38–39.

51 CERETI/MACKENZIE 2003, pp. 32–33.

whose place was that darkness (*ud ān tārīgīh gyāg ast kē asar-tārīgīh gōwēd*), i.e. the “darkness without beginning”, generated (*Ir.Bd.* 1, 28)<sup>52</sup> his own bad creation from the material Light, which is also the Light without beginning.

In any case before concluding this contribution, we must reflect on the objective difference we can see in the presentation of the cosmological background between the *Gāthās* and the Pahlavi sources. The *Gāthās*, in fact, still reflect an Indo-Iranian approach to the problem, a simpler and essential one, in which God is the basic organizer of the actual, “mixed”, reality; thus they declare that Ahura Mazdā fashioned (*dāit*) light and darkness, i.e. they were using a formula that the Pahlavi texts would never use in such a crude way. In this respect, the later Mazdean sources present us with a clearly developed theologico-philosophical reworking of the problem of the origin, where the phase before the creation and the creative actions are assessed and justified in a systematic form, which, of course, represented a clear re-elaboration of an older pattern. We must also consider that the Gāthic assessment of the world’s creation/organization confirms the strong monotheistic orientation of earlier Mazdeism, where, notwithstanding its dualistic framework, Ahura Mazdā, like Jahweh, “separated” the light from the darkness (*Genesis*, I, 4). We shall affirm that *Y.* 44, 5 apparently presents us with a stronger monotheism than that attested in *Genesis*; actually, in this *Gāthā*, it is in fact Ahura Mazdā who is attributed with the act of fashioning both light and darkness (the meaning of which requires at least an explicative exegesis as we have done), while, in *Genesis* it is immediately clear that Jahweh separated (*wayyabdēl*; causative from the root *bdl*;<sup>53</sup> according to the *Septuaginta*, διεχώρισεν)<sup>54</sup> the lights (’ôr; φῶς) from the darkness (*hōseq*; σκότος) just after the creation of the light he had commanded into existence, while darkness, covering the primordial abyss (*t<sup>e</sup>hōm*; ἄβυσσος in the *Septuaginta*; cf. I, 2) once enfolding the earth,<sup>55</sup> already existed before the created world.

This peculiar comparative situation deserved – I think – more attention than it has been given before. I am glad to dedicate this short research to the extraordinary memory of Professor RONALD E. EMMERICK, whose incomparable scholarly depth so widely shed more light over our field.

52 ZAEHNER 1955, p. 312; see now CERETI/MACKENZIE 2003, pp. 38–39.

53 Cf. GESENIUS 1962, pp. 34–35.

54 See RAHLFS 1935, p. 1.

55 We recall that such a word has been compared with Akkadian *tiāmtu*, *tāmtu*, *tāmdu* “sea” (see GESENIUS, 1962, p. 871a), but also with the name of the demoness *Tiāmat* (see BLACK/GEORGE/POSTAGATE 2000, p. 405. Cf. also CHEYNE/SUTHERLAND BLACK 1899, col. 31; very sceptical and openly “confessional” the position assumed by VON RAD 1978, p. 57, in this regard).

## References

- ANKLESARIA, B. T. 1956: *Zand-Ākāsīh. Iranian or Greater Bundahishn. Transliteration and Translation in English*. Bombay.
- AUFRECHT, A. 1877: *Die Hymnen des Rigveda*. Erster Theil: *Maṇḍala I–VI*. Zweiter Theil: *Maṇḍala VII–X*. Bonn.
- BARTHOLOMAE, CHR. 1904: *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*. Strassburg.
- BLACK, J./A. GEORGE/N. POSTAGATE 2000: *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*. Wiesbaden [2<sup>nd</sup> corrected printing].
- CASARTELLI, L. C. 1884: *La philosophie religieuse du Mazdéisme sous les Sassanides*. Louvain.
- CERETI, C./D. N. MACKENZIE 2003: "Except by battle: Zoroastrian cosmogony in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the *Greater Bundahishn*." In: C. CERETI/M. MAGGI/E. PROVASI (edd.): *Religious themes and texts of pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia: studies in honour of Professor Gherardo Gnoli on the occasion of his 65th birthday on 6 December 2002*. Wiesbaden (Beiträge zur Iranistik 24), pp. 31–59.
- CHEYNE, T. K./J. SUTHERLAND BLACK 1899: *Encyclopædia Biblica and Critical Dictionary of the Literary Political and Religious History, The Archaeology, Geography and Natural History of the Bible*. Vol. I: *A to D*. London.
- DHABHAR, E. B. N. 1949: *Pahlavi Yasna and Visperad. Edited with an Introduction and a Glossary of Select Terms*. Bombay (Pahlavi Text Series 8).
- DHALLA, M. N. 1908: *The Niyāishes or Zoroastrian Litanies. Avestan text with the Pahlavi, Sanskrit, Persian and Gujarati Versions*. New York (Columbia University Indo-Iranian Series, vol. VI).
- DONIGER, W. 2002: *Le origini del male nella mitologia indù*. Milano [= *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*. Berkeley 1976].
- GELDNER, K. F. 1908: *Zur Kosmogonie des RigVeda mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Liedes 10, 129*. Marburg.
- 1951: *Der Rig-Veda. Aus dem Sanskrit ins Deutsche übersetzt und mit einem laufenden Kommentar versehen*. Vol. I–IV. Cambridge (Harvard Oriental Series 33–36).
- GERSHEVITCH, I. 1959: *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra. With an Introduction, Translation and Commentary*. Cambridge (Oriental Publications 4) [repr. London 1967].
- GESENIUS, W. 1962: *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*. In Verbindung mit H. ZIMMERN, M. MÜLLER, O. WEBER, bearbeitet von Fr. BUHL. Berlin/Göttingen/Heidelberg.
- GNOLI, GH. 1962: "Un particolare aspetto del simbolismo della luce nel Mazdeismo e nel Manicheismo." In: AIUON [NS] 12, pp. 95–128.
- 1963: "Osservazioni sulla dottrina mazdaica della creazione." In: AION [NS] 13, pp. 163–193.
- GRASSMANN, H. 1996: *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda*. 6., überarbeitete und ergänzte Auflage von M. KOZIANKA. Wiesbaden.
- GRAY, L. H. 1908–1927: "Cosmogony and Cosmology (Iranian)." In: J. HASTINGS (ed.): *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. Vol. 4. Edinburgh, cols. 161–162.
- 1929: *The Foundations of the Iranian Religions. Being a Series of the Ratanbai Katrak Lectures delivered at Oxford*. Bombay (K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Publication 5).
- DE HARLEZ, C. 1879: "Des origines du Zoroastrisme (sixième et dernier article)." In: JA 7<sup>e</sup> série, tome 14 (Août–Septembre 1880), pp. 105–179.

- HENNING, W.B. 1942: "An Astronomical Chapter of the Bundahishn." In: JRAS 1942, pp. 229–248.
- HILLEBRANDT, A. 1913: *Lieder des Rgveda*. Göttingen/Leipzig.
- 1927: *Vedische Mythologie*. Bd. I. Breslau.
- 1980: *Vedic Mythology*. Translated by SR. R. SARMA. Vol. I. Delhi.
- HUMBACH, H. 1959: *Die Gathas des Zarathustra*. Bd. I: *Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung, Paraphrase*. Bd. II: *Kommentar*. Heidelberg.
- 1991: *The Gāthās of Zarathustra and the Other Old Avestan Texts*. In collaboration with J. ELFENBEIN and P.O. SKJÆRVØ. Part I: *Introduction – Text and Translation*. Part II: *Commentary*. Heidelberg.
- INSLER, S. 1975: *The Gāthās of Zarathustra*. Téhéran/Liège (AcIr 8).
- JACKSON, A.V.W. 1928: *Zoroastrian Studies. The Iranian Religion and Various Monographs*. New York (Columbia University Indo-Iranian Series, vol. XII).
- KELLENS, J. 1989: "Ahura Mazdā n'est pas un dieu créateur." In: *Études irano-aryennes offertes à Gilbert Lazard*. Réunies par C.-H. DE FOUCÉCOUR et PH. GIGNOUX. Paris (StIr, Cahier 7), pp. 217–228.
- KELLENS, J./E. PIRART 1988: *Les textes vieil-avestiques*. Vol. I: *Introduction, texte et traduction*. Wiesbaden.
- 1990: *Les textes vieil-avestiques*. Vol. II: *Répertoires grammaticaux et lexique*. Wiesbaden.
- 1991: *Les textes vieil-avestiques*. Vol. III: *Commentaire*. Wiesbaden.
- KÜNG, H./J. VAN ESS/H. VON STIETENCRON/H. BECHERT 1986: *Cristianesimo e religioni universali. Introduzione e dialogo con islamismo, induismo e buddhismo*. Traduzione a cura di G. MORETTO. Milano [= *Christentum und Weltreligionen. Hinführung zum Dialog mit Islam, Hinduismus und Buddhismus*. München 1984].
- LONG, C.H. 1963: *Alpha. The Myths of Creation*. Chico.
- MACDONELL, A.A. 1898: *Vedic Mythology*. Vol. III, I of G. BÜHLER (ed.): *Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde*. Strassburg [repr. Delhi 1974].
- 1917: *A Vedic Reader for Students*. Oxford [repr. Delhi 1987].
- MACKENZIE, D.N. 1964: "Zoroastrian Astrology in the *Bundahišn*." In: BSOAS 27, pp. 511–529 [= MACKENZIE, D.N. 1999: *Iranica Diversa*. Ed. by C. CERETI and L. PAUL. Vol. I. Rome (Serie Orientale Roma 84), pp. 7–25].
- MONTESI, G. 1953–1954: "Il valore cosmico dell'aurora nel pensiero mitologico del Rgveda." In: SMSR 24–25, pp. 111–132 [quoted according to MONTESI 1993, pp. 17–38].
- 1957: "Uṣāśānaktā *Mitologia vedica della notte*." In: SMSR 27, pp. 142–145 [quoted according to MONTESI 1993, pp. 39–82].
- 1993: *Miscellanea di studi storico-religiosi*. A cura di E. SANZI. Roma.
- MOULTON, J.H. 1913: *Early Zoroastrianism*. London.
- NYBERG, H.S. 1929: "Question de cosmogonie et de cosmologie mazdéennes." In: JA 1929, pp. 193–310.
- 1931: "Questions de cosmogonie et de cosmologie mazdéennes." In: JA 219, pp. 1–134.
- OBERLIES, TH. 1998: *Die Religion des Rgveda*. Teil I: *Das religiöse System des Rgveda*. Wien.
- PANAINO, A. 1990: *Tiṣṭrya*. Part I: *The Avestan Hymn to Sirius*. Rome (SOR 68,1).
- 1995: *Tiṣṭrya*. Part II: *The Iranian Myth of the Star Sirius*. Rome (SOR 68,2).
- 2001 [2000]: "In appendice al commento di Yašt VIII, 35." In: SOL 7, pp. 89–94.
- 2003: "The *bagān* of the Fratarakas: Gods or 'divine' Kings?" In: C. CERETI/M. MAGGI/E. PROVASI (edd.): *Religious themes and texts of pre-Islamic Iran and Cen-*

- tral Asia: studies in honour of Professor Gherardo Gnoli on the occasion of his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on 6 December 2002*. Wiesbaden (Beiträge zur Iranistik 24), pp. 283–306.
- PAPESSE, V. 1929–1931: *Inni del Rgveda*. Roma [repr. 1979].
- PETTAZZONI, R. 1990: *Miti e Leggende. In Principio. I Miti delle origini*. A cura di G. FILORAMO. Torino.
- PIRAS, A. 2000: *Hādōxt Nask 2. Il Racconto zoroastriano della sorte dell'anima. Edizione critica del testo avestico e pahlavi, traduzione e commento*. Roma (SOR 88).
- VON RAD, G. 1978: *Genesi. Traduzione e commento. Antico Testamento 2/4*. A cura di A. WEISER. Edizione italiana a cura delle Benedettine di Civitella San Paolo. Brescia. [= *Das erste Buch Mose. Genesis. Übersetzt und erklärt von G. VON RAD*. 9., überarbeitete Auflage. Göttingen 1972].
- RAHLFS, A. 1935: *Septuaginta id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*. Stuttgart.
- RENOU, L. 1956: *Hymnes spéculatifs du Véda*. Paris.
- 1966: *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*. Tome XV. Paris.
- SANI, S. 2000: *Rgveda. Le strofe della sapienza*. Venezia.
- SARNA, N.M. 1989: *The JPS Torah Commentary. Genesis*. [hāREF. *The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*. Philadelphia/New York/Jerusalem.
- SCHMITT, R. 1967: *Dichtung und Dichtersprache in indogermanischer Zeit*. Wiesbaden.
- SHAKED, SH. 1971: "The Notions 'mēnōg' and 'gētīg' in the Pahlavi Texts and their relation to Eschatology." In: *AcOr* 33, pp. 59–61.
- SPIEGEL, F. 1871: *Erānische Alterthumskunde*. Bd. I: *Geographie, Ethnographie und älteste Geschichte*. Leipzig.
- TARAF, Z. 1981: *Der Avesta-Text Niyāyiš mit Pahlavi- und Sanskritübersetzung*. München (MSS, Beiheft 10).
- VARENNE, J. 1967: *Le Veda. Premier livre sacré de l'Inde*. Textes réunis, traduits et présentés sous la direction de J. VARENNE. Paris.
- WEST, E.W. 1880: *Pahlavi Texts*. Part I: *The Bundahis-Bahman Yast and Shāyast lā-Shāyast*. Oxford (SBE 5).
- 1882: *Pahlavi Texts*. Part II: *The Dādistān-ī Dīnik and the Epistles of Mānūškīhar*. Oxford (SBE 18).
- WESTERMANN, C. 1959: *Genesis 1–11*. Neukirche. Westermann 1974 (compare fn 14): please complete!
- 1974:
- ZAEHNER, R. C. 1955: *Zurvan. A Zoroastrian Dilemma*. Oxford [repr. New York 1972].
- 1961: *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*. London.

